

House Republican Press Release

May 1, 2006
Press Office: 860-240-8700

REP FREY: LEGISLATURE APPROVES MAJOR TRANSPORTATION UPGRADES



New Package Will Benefit Western Connecticut

HARTFORD—State Representative John H. Frey, R-Ridgefield, today hailed a major transportation package approved by the House of Representatives on Wednesday, April 26. House Bill 5844, An Act Concerning The Roadmap For Connecticut's Economic

Future, which Rep. Frey co-sponsored, now moves to the State Senate for consideration.

HB 5844 would provide for improvements to highways and mass transit in all corners of the state, allocating \$2.3 billion over a 10-year period. Projects that would be funded include the completion of the engineering and design phase of widening Interstate 84 between Waterbury and Danbury.

Rep. Frey is the only legislator from the Greater Danbury delegation who serves on the Legislature's transportation bonding sub-committee and as a member, has made the widening of Interstate 84 a priority for transportation funding. In this role, Rep. Frey has also focused on commuter rail improvements for the greater Danbury area. HB 5844 also includes funding to upgrade rail cars and electrify the Danbury rail line. Rep. Frey has previously introduced bills to electrify the line.

The Department of Transportation has indicated that once improvements are completed, the Danbury line is expected to depart for New York City every 30 minutes throughout the day. Trains currently depart each half hour from 5:30 a.m. to 8 a.m., but the line only offers a few mid day departures.

"If we are serious about alleviating traffic congestion, such as on Route 7, increasing rail use has got to be part of the mix," said Rep. Frey, who serves as an Assistant Minority Leader. "By electrifying the Danbury rail line, we will provide for speedier and reliable transportation for our commuters. Completing the design and engineering phase of the I-84 widening also serves as a major jumpstart to that project, which will bring about a less congested, safer interstate for Western Connecticut."

Rep. Frey noted that the bill does not include previous proposals for increasing the state gasoline tax or bringing back highway tolls. The package will be funded through revenue bonds.

“Increasing the gas tax is simply unacceptable,” said Rep. Frey. “It is difficult to forget that we live in one of the most heavily taxed states in the nation and any additional tax hikes would only do further harm the economy. Also, I could not support any package that includes new highway tolls. In my recent constituent survey, more than two-thirds of the respondents opposed bringing back tolls. Clearly, the majority of people recognize that the problems caused by tolls are not worth any revenue they would bring to the state.”